

# THE PRICE OF GRAUSTARK

By George Barr McCutcheon

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(Continued.)

"It is time you informed yourself about the country you are trying to annex to the Blithers estate," she said sarcastically. "I can assist you to some extent if you will be good enough to listen. In the first place, the royal castle at Edelweiss is one of the most substantial in the world. It has not been allowed to fall into decay. In fact, it is inhabited from top to bottom by members of the royal household and the court. As for the furnishings, I can assure you that the entire Blithers fortune could not replace them if they were to be destroyed by fire or pillage. They are priceless, and they are unique. I have read that the hangings in the bedroom of the late Princess Yette are the most wonderful in the world. The throne chair in the great audience chamber is of solid gold and weighs nearly 3,000 pounds. It is studded with diamonds, rubies, emeralds."

"Great Scott, Lou, where did you learn all this?" he gasped, his eyes bulging.

"—and many other precious stones. There is one huge carpet in the royal drawing room that the czar of Russia is said to have offered £100,000 for and the offer was scorned. The park surrounding the castle is said to be beautiful beyond the power of description. The—"

"I asked you where you got all this information. Can you answer me?"

"I obtained all this and a great deal more from a lady who spent a year or two inside the castle walls. I refer to Mrs. Thurston King, who might have told you as much if you had possessed the intelligence to inquire."

"Gee whizz!" exclaimed Mr. Blithers, going back to his buoyant boyhood days for an adequate expression. "What a wonder you are, Lou! Say, but won't it make a wonderful home for you and me to spend a peaceful old age in when we get ready to lay aside the—"

He stopped short, for she had arisen and was standing over him with a quivering forefinger leveled at his nose.

"You may walk in where angels fear to tread, but you will walk alone, Will Blithers. I shall not be with you, and you may as well understand it now. I've told you a hundred things that money isn't everything, and it is as cheap as dirt when you put it alongside of tradition, honor, pride and loyalty. Those Graustarkians would take you by the nape of the neck and march you out of their castle so quick that your ears would ring. They will welcome her to buy their peace for Maudie to exhibit around the country, but you can't buy the intelligence of the people. The people of Graustark must have an opportunity to see and become acquainted with Maud before the marriage is definitely arranged."

"I will not have my daughter cast into a den of lions, Will—for that is what it may amount to. The people will adore her, they will welcome her with open arms if they are given the chance. But they will have none of her if she is forced upon them in the way you propose."

"I'll—I'll think it over," said Mr. Blithers, "but there's nothing on earth that can alter my determination to make Maud the Princess of Graustark. That's settled."

"Graustark, Will."

"Well, whatever it is," said he, and departed.

He thought hard until half-past 1, and then went to the wireless office, where he wrote out a message in cipher and directed the operator to waste no time in relaying it to his offices in Paris. It would be the height of folly to offer Scoville money, and it would be even worse to inspire the temporary imprisonment of the youth.

But there was a splendid alternative. He could manage to have his own daughter abducted—chaperon included—and held for ransom!

The more he thought of it the better it seemed to him, and so he sent a cipher message that was destined to throw his Paris managers into a state of agitation that could not possibly be measured by words. In brief, he instructed them to engage a few peaceable, trustworthy and positively respectable gentlemen—he was particularly exacting on the score of gentility—with orders to abduct the young lady and hold her in restraint until he arrived and arranged for her liberation. They were to do this without making any fuss about it, but at the same time they were to do it effectually.

He had the foresight to suggest that the job should be undertaken by the very detective agency he had employed to shadow young Scoville and also to keep an eye on Maud.

Late that evening he had a reply from his Paris managers. They inquired if he was responsible for the message they had received. It was a ticklish job, and they wanted to be sure the message was genuine. He wired back that he was the sender, and to go ahead. The next morning they notified him that his instructions would be carried out as expeditiously as possible.

About 11 o'clock the next day an incomprehensibly long message began to rattle out of the air. He contained himself in patience, for the matter of half an hour or so longer, and then, as the clatter continued without cessation, he got up and made his way to the door of the operator's office.

"What is it? The history of England?" he demanded sarcastically.

"Message for you, Mr. Blithers. It's a long one, and I had a hard time picking it up."

There were four sheets of writing at some outlandish price per word, but what cared he? His eyes almost started from his head as he took in the

name at the bottom of the message. It was "Maud."

He took the precaution to read it before handing it over to his wife, to whom it was addressed in conjunction with himself. It was from Paris and ran thus:

"Dear Father and Mother—In reply to your esteemed favor of the 18th, or possibly the 20th, I beg to inform you that I arrived safely in Paris as per schedule. Regarding the voyage, it was delightful. We had one or two rough days. The rest of the time it was perfectly heavenly. I met two or three interesting and amusing people on board, and they made the time pass most agreeably. I think I wired you that I had a glimpse of a certain person. On my arrival in Paris I was met at the station by friends and taken at once to the small, exclusive hotel where they are stopping for the summer. It is so small and exclusive that I'm sure you have never heard of it. I may as well tell you that I have seen Chantelle—you know who I mean—Chandler Scoville, and he has been very nice to me. Concerning your suggestion that I reconsider the statement issued to the press, I beg to state that I don't see any sense in taking the world into my confidence any farther than it has been taken already. If that is grammatically correct, I have also sent word to a certain person that he is not to pay any attention to the report that we are ready to change our minds in order to get out the greedy newspapers who don't appear to know when they have had enough. I hope that the voyage will leave here as you as much as it did me. If I felt any better than I do now I'd call for the police and have them arrest the fellow who tried to chicken a me as a bombardier in the Ritz restaurant. I found it delicious. I dare say they serve it as nicely on your ship as they do on the Jupiter, as the management is the same. Of course one never can tell about chefs. My plans are quite indefinite. I may leave here at any moment. If I should happen to be away from Paris when you arrive don't worry about me. I shall be all right and in safe hands. I will let you know where I am just as soon as I get settled somewhere. I shall not leave here without a peaceful. I am so distressed over what has occurred that I don't feel as though I could ever be seen in public again without a thick veil and a pair of goggles. I have plenty of money for immediate use, but you might deposit something to my credit at the Credit Lyonnais, as the least idea how long I shall stay over here. Miranda is well and is taking good care of the children. She is out of her sight if that is any comfort to you. I hope you will forgive the brevity of this communication and please write when I say that it is not lack of love for you both that curtails its length, but the abominable hot weather. With endless love from your devoted daughter,

It was nearly bedtime before word came from his managers in Paris. Bedtime had no meaning for him after he had worked out the message by the code. It is true that he observed a life long custom and went to bed, but he did not do it for the purpose of going to sleep.

"Your daughter has disappeared from Paris. All efforts to locate her have failed. Friends say she left ostensibly for the Pyrenees, but inquiries at stations and along line fail to reveal trace of her. Scoville still here and apparently in the dark. He is being watched. Her companion and maid left with her last night. Prince of Graustark and party left for Edelweiss today."

So read the message from Paris.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Word of Encouragement.

ONE usually has breakfast on the porch of the Hotel Schweizerhof at Interlaken. It is the most fashionable hostelry in the quaint little town at the head of the lake of Thun, but it is of an excellent character, and the rolls and honey to be had with one's breakfast cannot be surpassed in the Bernese Oberland.

R. Schmidt sat facing the dejected Roske Dank. His eyes were dancing with the joy of living.

"Well, here we are, and, in spite of that, where are we?" said Dank, who saw nothing beautiful in the smile of any early morn. "I mean to say, what have we to show for our pains? We sneak into this God forsaken hamlet, surrounded on all sides by abominations in the shape of tourists, and at the end of twenty-four hours we find out that the fair Miss Guile has played us a shabby trick. I dare say she is laughing herself sick over the whole business."

"Which is more than you can say for yourself, Roske," said Robin blithely. "Brace up! All is not lost. We'll wait here a day or two longer and then—"

"Hello, who is this approaching? It is no other than the great Gouron himself, the king of sleuths, as they say in the books I used to read. Good morning, baron."

The sharp visaged little minister of police came up to the table and fixed an accusing eye upon his sovereign—the literal truth, for he had the other eye closed in a protracted wink.

"I regret to inform your majesty that the enemy is upon us," he said. "I fear that our retreat is cut off. Nothing remains save—"

"Where is she?" demanded Robin, unimpressed by this glowing panegyric.

"At this instant, sir, I fancy she is rallying her forces in the very face of a helpless mirror. In other words, she is preparing for the fray. She is dressing."

"When did she arrive?"

"She came last night via Milan."

"From Milan?" cried Robin, astonished.

"A roundabout way, I'll admit," said the baron, dryly, "and tortuous in these hot days, but admirably suited to the purpose. I should say that she was bent on throwing some one off the track."

"And yet she came!" cried the prince, in exultation. "She wanted to come, after all, now didn't she, Dank?"

He gave the lieutenant a look of triumph.

"She is more dangerous than I thought," said the guardsman mournfully.

"Sit down, baron," commanded the prince. "I want to lay down the law to all of you. You three will have to move on to Graustark and leave me

to look out for myself. I will not have Miss Guile!"

"No!" exclaimed the baron, with unusual vehemence. "I expected you to propose something of the kind, and I am obliged to confess to you that we have discussed the contingency in advance. We will not leave you. That is final. You may depose us, ex-



Garvick

"Where is she?" demanded Robin.

He us, curse us or anything you like, but still we shall remain true to the duty we owe to our country. We stay here, Prince Robin, just so long as you are content to remain."

Robin's face was very red. "You shame me, baron," he said simply.

"Now, I have a suggestion of my own to offer," said the baron, taking a seat at the end of the table. "I confess that Miss Guile may not be favorably impressed by the constant attendance of three able-bodied nurses, and, as she happens to be no fool, it is reasonably certain that she will grasp the significance of our assiduity. Now I propose that the count, Dank and myself, escape ourselves as completely as possible during the rest of our enforced stay in Interlaken. I propose that we take quarters in another hotel and leave you and Hobbs to the tender mercies of the enemy. It seems to me that—"

"Good!" cried Robin. "That's the ticket! I quite agree to that, baron."

Ten o'clock found the three gentlemen so classified by Hobbs—out of the Schweizerhof and arranging for accommodations at the Regina Hotel Jungfrau.

He was somewhat puzzled by the strange subservience of his companions. Deep down in his mind lurked the disquieting suspicion that they were conniving to get the better of the lovely temptress by some sly and secret bit of strategy. What had become of their anxiety, their eagerness to drag him off to Graustark by the first train?

Enlightenment came unexpectedly and with a shock to his composure. Two people emerged from the door and, passing by without so much as a glance in his direction, made their way to the mounting block. Robin's heart went down to his boots. Bedelia, a graceful figure in a smart riding habit, was laughing, blithely over a soft spoken remark that her companion had made as they were crossing the porch. And that companion was no other than the tall, good looking fellow who had met her at Cherbourg! The prince, stunned and incredulous, watched them mount their horses and canter away, followed by a groom who seemed to have sprung up from nowhere.

"Good morning, Mr. Schmidt," spoke a voice, and, still bewildered, he whirled, hat in hand, to confront Mrs. Gaston. "Did I startle you?"

He bowed stiffly over the hand she held out for him to clasp and murmured something about being proof against any surprise.

"Isn't it a glorious morning? And how wonderful she is in this gorgeous sunlight," went on Mrs. Gaston, in what may be described as a hurried, nervous manner.

"I had the briefest glimpse of her," mumbled Robin. "When did she come?"

"Centuries and centuries ago, Mr. Schmidt," said she, with a smile. "I was speaking of the Jungfrau."

"Oh!" he exclaimed, flushing. "I thought you—er—yes, of course! Really quite wonderful."

"Your mind has gone horseback riding, I fear. At present it is between here and Lauterbrunnen, jogging beside that roaring little torrent that—"

"I don't mind confessing that you are quite right," he said frankly. "You are in love."

"I am," he confessed.

She laid her hand upon his. Her eyes were wide with eagerness. "Would it drive away the blues if I were to tell you that you have a chance to win her?"

He felt his head spinning. "If—I could believe that—that he began and choked up with the rush of emotion that swept through him.

"She is a strange girl. She will marry for love alone. Her father is determined that she shall marry a royal prince. That much I may confess to you. She has defied her father, Mr. Schmidt. She will marry for love, and I believe it is in your power to awaken love in that adorable heart of hers. You!"

"For God's sake, Mrs. Gaston, tell me—tell me, has she breathed a word to you that—"

"Not a single word. But I know her well. I have known her since she was a baby, and I can read the soul that looks out through those lovely eyes."

(To Be Continued.)

FUNERAL DESIGNS AND BOUQUETS  
JOHN RECK & SON.

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### "FATHER AND SON" FEAST TO BE HELD

At the First Presbyterian church, Friday evening, the annual "Father and Son" banquet will be held. No man will be admitted without a son and no son without a father or parent. The Ladies' Benevolent society will serve the banquet. Rowland Sheldon of New York, general secretary of the Big Brother movement, will address the feasters.

### MONROE

Mr. and Mrs. Hiram Kelly have moved from William Jones' house in Huntington, into the tenement house of Louis B. Beardsley in Monroe.

Philip Blakeman shot one of his dogs recently, as it acted strangely, and it was thought suffering with the rabies.

A little son came to gladden the home of Mr. and Mrs. George S. Hawley on Saturday, Feb. 26. Both mother and son are doing nicely.

Marshall Beach does not improve as fast as his many friends wish, and is present in suffering terribly with his eyes. Dr. H. S. Miles, eye specialist of Bridgeport, was called on Sunday in consultation with Dr. Wales.

Mr. and Mrs. William Mix, who have spent the last three months at the home of her father, Wells W. Lewis, leave this week and will visit her sister, Mrs. Charles C. Lacey, of Plattville, and relatives in Bridgeport before returning to the home in the Adirondacks, New York.

Miss Gertrude A. Beardsley, a highly esteemed resident, passed away on Tuesday, aged 69 years. She was a useful member of the community and a woman of lovable qualities, and was a great favorite of all, especially of the children, of whom she was very fond, being a Sunday school teacher for years. She was a member of St. Peter's church in childhood, and was always present at the services, and took a lively interest in the musical part of the church service until she was obliged to give it up on account of throat trouble. She will be sadly missed by all. She is survived by four sisters, Mrs. Susan Clarke of Huntington, Mrs. Lorenzo Beers of Stratford, Mrs. Jennie Beardsley of Long Hill, and Mrs. Anna Beardsley of Monroe, and one brother, Robert E. Beardsley, with whom she resided. The funeral was attended from St. Peter's church on Friday afternoon, Rev. Henry S. Hershman, pastor, officiating. Frank Beardsley sang "Peace, Perfect Peace." The pall bearers were Samuel B. Hurd, Edwin C. Shelton, Frank J. Wales, Ambrose S. Hurd, Edward L. Hurd and Edward S. Beardsley. There was a profusion of beautiful floral tributes.

Regular meeting of Washington lodge Monday evening, March 13, with work in the Fellowcraft degree.

### LITCHFIELD COUNTY NEWS.

Looses an Eye.

William E. Phillips, a caster at the Coe Brass branch of the American Brass Co. in Torrington, whose eye was put out by the explosion of a boiler in a hot metal a few weeks ago, has returned from the New York hospital where he has been under treatment. While he has lost the sight of the injured eye, the other remains so far from having been affected.

An Intelligent Horse.

Joseph Carter, of Morris started to drive from the former town to Litchfield, Tuesday, and shortly after starting, the sleigh tips over and spilled him out. The sleigh righted itself and the horse went on. About half a mile further on the horse turned his head, saw there was no one in the sleigh, turned around and went to his owner and the ride to Litchfield was resumed.

First Degree Murder.

The grand jury met at Winsted, Friday, to consider the case of John Lewandowski, alias John Gzyzskof of Terryville, charged with first degree murder, in having caused the death of George Maslanka of Terryville. It is said that January 28 Lewandowski and Maslanka were in a Terryville saloon, and that the former asked Maslanka to buy him a drink but was refused, the murdered man saying that he was married and had taxes to pay. An argument then developed, and the accused man said that Maslanka drew a knife. After the affair, Lewandowski left the saloon, saying he would get Maslanka, which he did, assaulting him with a knife tied in a handkerchief and inflicting such injuries that the man died. The grand jury returned a true bill for first degree murder.

Loss by Fire.

Fire gutted the two story dwelling of Captain Corbett, the Winsted, Friday morning, and made homeless the family of James Stella. Mrs. Stella discovered the blaze in the kitchen. The loss is between \$1,200 and \$1,500, fully covered by insurance.

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SEALED PROPOSALS will be received at the office of the State Highway Commissioner, State Capitol, Hartford, Connecticut, until 2 p. m. of March 22nd, 1916, for furnishing Automobile Supplies and Sundries for the year ending April 1st, 1917. Blank forms of proposals giving quantities of the various kinds of supplies needed may be obtained at the office of the State Highway Commissioner.

All proposals must be accompanied by a surety bond or certified check in one-third (1-3) of the amount of the bid.

The State Highway Commissioner reserves the right to reject any and all bids.

C. J. BENNETT,  
State Highway Commissioner.  
Dated at Hartford, Connecticut, this 6th day of March, 1916.

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